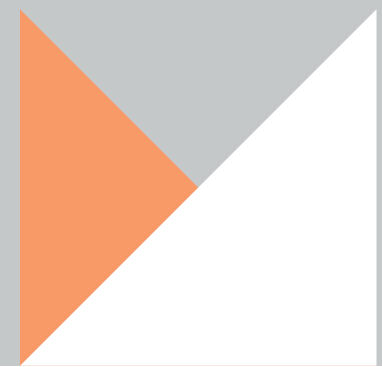


dixon walter

Summer

NEWSLETTER

August 2023



Challenges

Facing Senior Level Recruitment in HE

Industrial action, legacies of the pandemic, and underrepresentation are all factors that are having a huge impact on the ability to attract and retain senior talent in the current HE market on a national scale.

We have taken the time to unpack some of these factors in more detail as we look forward to approaching the new Academic Year.

The “Great Resignation” (a term proposed by Anthony Klotz, from Texas A&M University) which followed the pandemic is affecting the global marketplace and not just the HE sector, but this rise in global mobility and shifts in demographic profiles, combined with the fact that Universities are often considered anomalies in terms of their unique staffing requirements and management structures, has created a perfect storm for the ongoing recruitment demands placed upon the sector.

The further changes to tuition fees continue to create a more customer-focused environment, where candidates from the private sector are viewed as having the commercial skills required to handle contemporary students however sourcing talent from outside sectors remains difficult (in the UK, academic pay is low relative to other highly qualified jobs) and often systemic bias can intervene at final interviews.

Autumn and Winter saw industrial action across the sector; disputes over pay and conditions as well as pensions is set to continue and is straining relations, arguably damaging the reputation of the sector within candidate markets and making movement within the sector with all of its logistical challenges with regards to benefits less appealing.

Whilst we have seen the difficulties in certain areas for some time now (for instance the joint report of UHR and AUDE which focussed on the difficulties experienced in recruiting staff in estates and facilities management within the sector back in September 2022), these difficulties are “spreading” across the HE landscape.

As budgets have become stretched, many universities have followed the lead of the private sector and have implemented perpetual voluntary redundancy schemes, which have created a vacuum of “institutional memory”. We have seen many institutions move to using interim support to fill these gaps but this is not sustainable and can impact the student experience.



Keys

To Change

Change for the sector

It is a period of significant challenge and change for the sector as a whole. Recognising the combination of stress factors, residual pandemic issues and the resulting stress and burn-out amongst all staff (not just senior leadership) could be a real issue of the future, and those employers demonstrating real empathy and mitigation will gain significant advantage in the talent markets.

Recruitment and retention needs to adapt to the demands of the candidate-led market where choice, transparency and authenticity are key. Recruitment within the sector needs to keep up if tomorrow's leaders are to fulfil the enhanced brief of "success".

From our experience in recruiting senior talent across both senior academic and professional service appointments we have noted that greater success is awarded to those institutions who have considered their Employee Value Proposition.

In other words "What is in it for me?"

No longer is the candidate market led by pay and position alone, instead flexibility, sustainability and diversity are all key drivers for candidates; especially candidates who would be considered as passive (i.e. those approached by "head-hunters").

Flexibility has been the order of the day since the pandemic. Despite some flexible working methods having been required (and, for many, working successfully) during the pandemic, some employers are keen to have a return to pre-pandemic norms, resulting in a mismatch between employer and employee preferences. This raises further questions around the concept of leadership and if in fact it is possible to be a successful leader if you are remote. Forbes have published an article discussing the five ways to be a successful remote leader.

We encourage our clients to demonstrate a flexible approach to flexible working as part of any recruitment campaign to attract the best talent (and indeed to retain it). Flexibility will unlock areas of the market that previously could not have been an option.

Demonstrating flexibility alone is not enough. Having career development plans and continued personal development plans in place are also key considerations for prospective candidates but perhaps more important is the expectation to see a clear and committed approach to diversity and sustainability reflecting a fair and inclusive workplace.

According to Glassdoor, 67% of jobseekers say that diversity is an important reason they apply for a job. When there is no evidence of diversity and inclusion, the chance of receiving applications from top-performing diversity candidates significantly lowers.

It is common for HE institutions to publish mission and value statements that incorporate a commitment to EDI and focus on linked concepts such as internationalisation or social responsibility. However, mission and value statements are only effective when translated into action. We often see programmes and initiatives in place to increase diversity within student bodies but less so when it comes to the workforce within institutions. Certain minority groups remain under-represented at senior management levels, or face barriers to career progression in HE. There is a need to embed the principles of EDI fully into the strategies, practices, and cultures in order that all staff feel included and supported to progress, but to also reflect these strategies into recruitment material. The good news is that several institutions are already making great strides for improvement; programmes such as Elevate, for instance, offer a unique opportunity for staff from Black, Asian or Minority ethnic backgrounds and who identify as female, to meet, share leadership concepts and introduce ideas together from universities across the South West.

As specialist Executive Search Consultants to the sector we have also noted a trend toward less traditional roles and a rise in "Transformational and Strategic Project" senior leadership positions being created which have cross institutional presence and a remit to implement organisational wide change to navigate the ever changing modern demands placed upon institutions. Setting up Boards to govern continuous improvement has become common place and a need to pull together often siloed departments, leading multidisciplinary teams and building positive, cohesive relationships and goals have become a priority. Embracing this opportunity to commercialise and move away from the more traditional structures of an institution will allow for greater agility to navigate change.



Movers And Shakers

Let's look at just some of the recent Movers and Shakers in the sector.

UHR Updates

From early September, Vikki Matthews will be the new CPO at the OU, and David Harris will take over at Bradford.

Kevin Browne has stepped up at SGUL to fill the gap left by Jenny Winters. Gillian Magee has just started as CPO at QUB, and congratulations to Reading's Claire Rolstone and to Jisc's Georgina Crean who have been confirmed as HRDs after acting up; and to Elise Gallagher, taking over at Dundee in July. Welcome back to Caragh Molloy, now HRD at Westminster, to Sonya Clarkson, now CPO at Leeds Trinity, and to Peter Gregory, covering the HRD role at Northampton, following Deborah Mattock's departure.

[Read the full article here >](#)

Estates and Facilities Updates

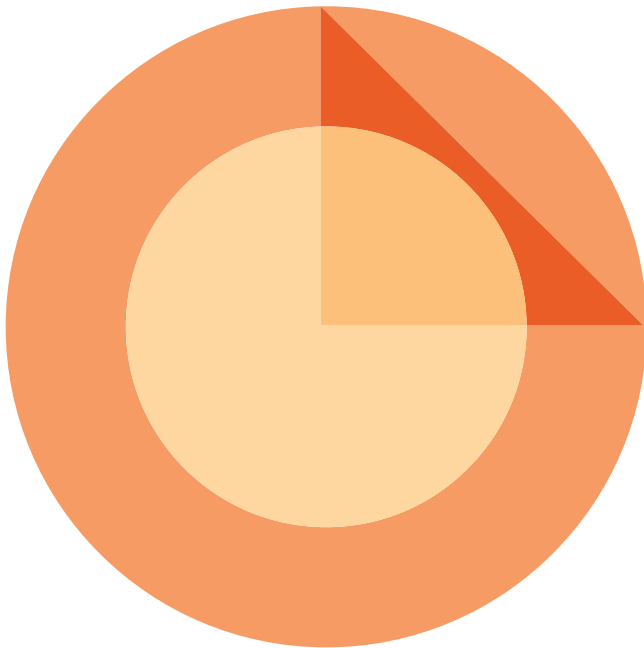
This space is extremely buoyant at the moment with a number of positions currently being advertised, we are seeing a great level of promotion within the sector, as well as interim placements to support what appears to be a challenge for talent.

Institutions such as Lincoln, London Met, City University London and University of Exeter are all currently in the market.

Here are just some of the recent movers and shakers;

- Rob Wadsworth has been appointed Director of Campus Innovation: Campus Services at the University of Leeds.
- Following the trend of seeking interim appointments, UCLAN have appointed Mike Sheppard as Director of Estates through a campaign managed by our in-house Estates experts at Dixon Walter.
- University of Leicester have promoted Kirsty Woodward, who took up the substantive Director position from June 2023.
- Following the retirement of Andrew Burgess from Lancaster, Dixon Walter launched a campaign to find a replacement for the Director of Estates Facilities & Commercial Services position. We have recently appointed from outside of the sector on both this role and also in support of the Director of Estate Planning and Development at Liverpool.


[Watch this space for the announcements!! →](#)





Notable C-Suite Appointments

- Professor Nic Beech has been appointed as the next Vice-Chancellor of the University of Salford.
- In May UEA welcomed Professor David Maguire as the University's new Vice-Chancellor. Previously he was Vice-Chancellor at the University of Greenwich, and Interim Vice-Chancellor at the University of Dundee and the University of Sussex.
- The University of Wales Trinity Saint David will see its first female vice-chancellor joining the ranks later this year. Professor Elwen Evans, KC, will succeed professor Medwin Hughes, who is retiring after 23 years in the post.
- University of Gloucestershire has made an exciting new appointment at the top, with Clare Marchant named as the new Vice-Chancellor. Clare, who has been the UCAS Chief Executive for the past six years, will join the University later this year.
- The Open University has appointed Professor Tim Blackman as its next Vice-Chancellor who will take up his new role on the 1 October. Professor Blackman (pictured, left) is currently Vice-Chancellor of Middlesex University and has served in this role since July 2015.
- Two new senior appointments announced at Queen's. Professor Judy Williams has been appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students and will join Queen's on 1 September 2023 from The University of Manchester and Alistair Finlay has been appointed University Secretary.
- The University of Hull have announced that Professor Kevin Kerrigan has been appointed as its next Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC). Professor Kerrigan will join Hull from Sheffield Hallam University, where he is currently Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and Enterprise. He will take up his post from 1 October 2023.
- Alistair Jarvis has been appointed as the University of London's new Pro Vice-Chancellor of Partnerships and Governance.
- Henrietta O'Connor appointed Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at University of Leicester taking up the role from 1 August 2023. Henrietta is currently Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (CSSAH).
- Professor Jonathan Wastling has been appointed Brunel's new Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and is set to take up his new role on 1 September. Jonathan joins Brunel from the University of Keele, where he is Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences.



Notable C-Suite Appointments (continued)

- Lancaster University appointed renowned theoretical physicist as its new Vice Chancellor; Professor Andy Schofield. Professor Schofield took up the post from 1st May and became the University's 7th Vice Chancellor.
- Keele has appointed its first ever Pro Vice-Chancellor for International to its senior leadership team to further strengthen its international outlook following a national campaign directed by Dixon Walter; Professor Antonius Raghubansie took up the post in May.
- Loughborough University has appointed Jo Maher as its first ever Pro Vice-Chancellor for Sport. Jo, a University alumna, is currently the Principal and CEO of Loughborough College.
- Aston University has appointed Professor Osama Khan as its new Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic. Professor Khan will be joining Aston University in October from the University of Surrey where he is currently Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic, leading on education strategy, teaching excellence and student learning experience.
- Professor David Mba has been appointed as the new Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham City University from UAL, where he is Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise, Professor Mba will take up his new role on 1 October, replacing Professor Philip Plowden who is retiring after six years at the helm.
- Professor Colin Riordan to join the ACU as Interim Secretary General and Chief Executive.
[Read the full article here →](#)
- Dr Ghazwa Alwani-Starr appointed as new Chief Operating Officer.
[Read the full article here →](#)
- New VC for University of Wolverhampton
[Read the full article here →](#)

Got a question? Email Dixon Walter >